

# IRISH BIBLICAL STUDIES

# IRISH BIBLICAL STUDIES

## Editor:

Rev Professor J. C. McCullough  
Union Theological College  
26 College Green, Belfast BT7 1LN

## Associate Editors:

Rev. Professor Ernest Best  
13 Newmill Gdns  
St. Andrews KT16 8RY

Rev. Professor E.A. Russell  
Union Theological College  
26 College Green, Belfast BT7 1LN

## Assistant Editors:

Rev. D. P. Ker  
Rev. D. J. Templeton

## Editorial Advisory Panel:

Rev. Dr. David Hill, 3 Ashdill Court, 26 Westbourn Rd., Sheffield S10 2QQ.  
Rev. Dr. W. S. Campbell, Westhill College, Selly Oak, Birmingham 29.  
Dr. J.G. McConville, 146 Leckhampton Rd., Cheltenham, GL53 0DH, England,  
Rev. Dr. R.J. McKelvey, 64 Brooklawn Drive, Withington, Manchester M20 3GZ.  
Rev. Martin O'Callaghan, Trench House, St Mary's College, Belfast BT11  
Professor E. Nicholson, Oriel College, Oxford.  
Rev. Vincent Parkin, Edgehill College, Belfast BT9 5BY.  
Mr David Payne, 2 Westfield Ave., Watford, Herts. WD2 4EB

## Subscriptions

**Individuals** £8.00 Sterling

**Institutions** £13.00 Sterling or \$26.00 US

All subscriptions should be made payable to "Irish Biblical Studies" and addressed to the Editor.

ISSN 0268-6112

Copyright © IBS 1996

# IRISH BIBLICAL STUDIES

## Volume 18, January 1996

### Contents

- |                 |  |       |
|-----------------|--|-------|
| Donald B. Sharp | "The Remnant of Zephaniah: Identifying a 'People Humble and Lowly'". | 2-15  |
| George K. Barr  | Contrasts in Scale and Genre in the Letters of Paul and Seneca.      | 16-25 |
| M. R. J. Bredin | The Influence of the Aqedah on Revelation 5:6-9.                     | 26-43 |

### Book Reviews

John Dominic Crossan: *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*. (Denis Campbell); Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey (editors), *Scriptural Interpretation in the Fathers*. (Laurence S. Kirkpatrick); C. Schäfer-Lichtenberger. *Josua und Salomo: eine Studie zu Autorität und Legitimität des Nachfolgers im alten Testament*. (G. McConville).

44-52



## **"THE REMNANT OF ZEPHANIAH: IDENTIFYING 'A PEOPLE HUMBLE AND LOWLY'"**

*Donald B. Sharp, S.J.*

---

### **Introduction**

The prophet Zephaniah appears to have arisen out of the ashes of the all but forgotten Yahwistic cult of his ancestors. With a dire proclamation he ushers in the rebirth of prophetic activity in the Kingdom of Judah, which had experienced nearly a three-quarters of a century of prophetic silence. According to the Second Book of Kings, this had been a time of religious turmoil, brought about by the reign of Manasseh (687/6-642 B. C. E.). But in spite of Zephaniah's harsh and drastic utterance -- "I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth, says the Lord" (Zeph 1 :2 -- he speaks of a remnant, "a people humble and lowly" (3:12). Who was to be this remnant? Judaite who had turned from their erroneous ways or an "underground" worshipping community who had never forsaken their God? This article will explore the possibility that Zephaniah's "remnant" consisted of an underground worshipping community of Mosaic covenant Yahwists, many of whom, perhaps, were descendants of the refugees who fled to the south at the time of the destruction of Samaria.

### **Historical Setting of the Prophet Zephaniah**

The portrait presented by the author of 2 Kings 21 is, needless to say, less than complimentary in respect to the reign of Manasseh. In his break-away from the policies of his father, Hezekiah, who had attempted to restore the Yahwistic worship, there is little disagreement that the religious consequences were monumental. Once again the high places were rebuilt and staffed, alters to Baal were erected, the sacred pole, the *asherah*,<sup>1</sup> was constructed, astral

---

<sup>1</sup> For a complete discussion on the function of the *asherah* or "sacred pole", see J. C. de Moor, "N 'asherah," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, 438-44.

cults were practised, the abominable rite of child sacrifice reintroduced, various types of divination allowed, and a carved image of Asherah was set up in the Temple.

Two possible explanations have been offered for Manasseh's reversal of his father's "reformation." The first, that it was, in part, a consequence of his vassal relationship with the successors of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanapal which obligated him to impose upon his subjects the suzerain's system of cultic worship.<sup>2</sup> Although he might well have been forced to introduced the cults and deities of Assyria, his actions appear to have gone far beyond what was required, resulting in complete "repudiation of the reform party [Hezekiah's] and all its works."<sup>3</sup> As a result of his syncretistic efforts, the Yahwism of old all but disappeared. This would have been inevitable. The true identity of Yahwism had become obscured and "was in danger of slipping unawares into outright polytheism."<sup>4</sup>

The second explanation is that the religious chaos of this period was not just the result of Manasseh being forced to accommodate the religious cult of Assyria and the propitiation of her gods,<sup>5</sup> but the

---

<sup>2</sup> See Bernard Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall) 362; John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1981) 312.

<sup>3</sup> Bright, 312. See also Anderson, 362f.

<sup>4</sup> Bright, 312.

<sup>5</sup> Morton Cogan (*Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries BCE* [Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974] 60) comments: "Our re-examination of Assyrian imperial organization finds that we must reject conventional statements which view 'the whole organization centered around the worship of Ashur' [A. T. Olmstead, "Oriental Imperialism," *American Historical Review* 23 (1917-18) 758], the deified state and the reigning king fanatically imposing active worship of Assyrian gods upon defeated populations. Assyria distinguished between territories annexed as provinces directly under her control and vassal lands under native rule. The latter were free of any cultic obligations toward their master." See also John McKay, *Religion in Judah under the*



result of an internal domestic struggle.<sup>6</sup> Those in support of this hypothesis suggest a conflict between the loyalists of Yahwism and those who were willing to adapt to the non-Israelite customs and cults. The former group would have consisted of prophets, loyalist priests of the temple, and the faithful followers of the true Yahwistic cult; the latter, the royal family, members of the court, apostate priests who undoubtedly presided over the cultic worship of the Baal and Ashtarte and the various astral cults. This latter group of reconciliationists appears to have sought "to create out of the entire population of the country a society characterised by its syncretistic culture."<sup>7</sup> As a result, it is plausible that a large segment of the population might well have given up hope that its God was any longer in control of this political and religious crisis, and, under the encouragement of Manasseh, submitted to the seemingly more powerful gods of the foreigners.<sup>8</sup>

---

*Assyrians* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson Inc., 1973) 20-27; Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1994) 45.

<sup>6</sup> See John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller, eds., *Israelite and Judean History* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977) 452-55.

<sup>7</sup> Hayes and Miller, 453. See also Berlin, 45.

<sup>8</sup> McKay (27) comments: "the reign of Manasseh was ideally suited to the revival of paganism. As the Assyrians asserted their authority, Judah began to recognize her weakness and the excitement of rebellion died. No doubt, when the people realized there was no real hope of independence in the foreseeable future, their religious fervour was also quenched. Disillusioned once more by the ineffectuality of their national god, many must have turned to the stronger gods of Assyria and to the cults which offered more immediate satisfaction. . . . It does, however, also seem fairly clear that Manasseh himself positively encouraged this revival of heathenism, since he introduced the gods of his intimate allies, permitted both foreign and superstitious religion in the Temple precincts, and attempted to silence opposition." See also Berlin, 81.

## A Time of Persecution

The text of Second Kings implies that this syncretistic movement did not proceed without opposition and that "much innocent blood" (21:16) was shed. It would appear that anyone who opposed Manasseh's syncretistic inclinations was dealt with harshly, leading to mass executions. Although there is not clear textual evidence that any of the prophets who had resisted these compromises were executed, the long prophetic silence, in a period in which one would naturally expect to hear their protests, suggests that prophetic voices were suppressed.<sup>9</sup>

Whether the abandonment of traditional Yahwism, a movement clearly approved by Manasseh, was due to a forced implementation of a foreign culture and religion or the result of the people's disenchantment with the apparent ineffectivity of her God, the result was the same: Judah was plunged into the "dark age" of her history.<sup>10</sup> This, in turn, might well have forced the Yahwistic loyalists to "go underground" in order to escape persecution and preserve the "true" Yahwistic cult from extinction.<sup>11</sup>

## The Rebirth of Yahwism and the Prophet Zephaniah

---

<sup>9</sup> According to the pseudepigraphal tradition, the prophet Isaiah was sawed in half at the behest of Manasseh. For this account, see *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* 5:1-16 in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1985) 163-64. John Gray (*I and II Kings* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970] 709) comments that "...the persecution would not be limited to such outstanding figures [the prophets], but would be directed against many lesser men, who, in representing the true tradition of Israel's faith in Yahweh, were loyal nationalists, and as such noxious to Manasseh as an Assyrian vassal." See also Flavius Josephus, *Antig.* 10.3.1.

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, 364.

<sup>11</sup> Davie Napier, *Song of the Vineyard*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) 193.



In the midst of the religious chaos brought about by Manasseh, Zephaniah, as the phoenix of mythological fame, suddenly appears out of the ashes of a defunct Yahwism. Who was this prophet? From where did he come? When did he prophesy?<sup>12</sup> All of these questions are neither easily nor satisfactorily answered in today's scholarly circles. What little is known of the prophet himself is to be found in the book's superscription (Zeph 1:1).

### **Zephaniah: Name and Family**

The name "Zephaniah" is generally considered by commentators to mean "YHWH has hidden," "YHWH has treasured," etc. The name is not that unusual in the biblical text, occurring in reference to four different individuals,<sup>13</sup> and has been found outside of it.<sup>14</sup> It has been suggested that this is not a given name<sup>15</sup> but a chosen name which was intended to reflect the persecution during the reign of

---

<sup>12</sup> The question of dating the Book of Zephaniah is a very complex matter and goes far beyond the scope of this work. I accept the majority opinion that the prophet was active early in the reign of Josiah, ca. 635-625 B C. Some scholars prefer a post-Josian reform date during the reign of Jehoikim (e.g., J. Philip Hyatt ("The Date and Background of Zephaniah," *JNES* 7 [1948]: 25-29) and Donald Williams ("The Date of Zephaniah," *JBL* 82 [1963]: 77-88) would place it in the reign of Jehoikim after the failure of the Josian reform; others, a post-monarchic date (e. g., Louise Smith and Ernest R. Lacheman ("The Authorship of the Book of Zephaniah," *JNES* 9 [1950]: 137-42) and, most recently, Ehud Ben Zvi, (*A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991] 353-56). For the most recent discussion on this topic, see Berlin, 33-43.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Jer 21:1, Zech 6:10, and 1 Chr 6:21. In addition to these, the root *spn* also occurs in other biblical names: Elzaphan and Elizaphan (Ex 6:22; Lev 10:4; Num 3:30; 34:25; 1 Chr 15:8; 2 Chr 29:13).

<sup>14</sup> Archaeological excavations at Lachish have unearthed a seal impression from the early sixth-century bearing the name *spnyhw*. Cf *RB* 75 (1968): 401-2.

<sup>15</sup> Milos Bic, *Trois prophètes dans un temps de ténèbres. Sophonie Nahum Habaquq* (Paris: Les Édition du Cerf, 1968) 41



Manasseh.<sup>16</sup> There are also those who read the name as “Zaphoniah,” thus rendering it as “Zaphon is Yah.”<sup>17</sup> If this were the case, one might justifiably trace the prophet’s origins to the Northern Kingdom.

The superscription is unusual in that it traces back Zephaniah’s family line to four generations to a certain “Hezekiah,” often considered to be the Judean king of the late eight-century. For some this appears to be an attempt to give him “credentials.” Since his father is listed as “Cushi,” there existed a possible implication that his origins were from the land of Cush (Ethiopia). This could have cast doubt on his Israelite purity.<sup>18</sup> Clearly, a royal connection to Hezekiah could explain his support for religious reform in the post-Manasseh era: it was rooted in his family history.<sup>19</sup> But this would not necessarily preclude a link to the Northern Kingdom to which his message appears to have an affinity. His oracles resemble more of a Mosaic covenant mentality than that of the Davidic tradition first mentioned in 2 Samuel 7. Although in the theology of Zephaniah Jerusalem was the sacred City, it could be destroyed and the “. . . relationship between God and the people could be dissolved ...”<sup>20</sup>

## ***Zephaniah and Deuteronomistic Theology***

Furthering the possibility that Zephaniah’s theological roots, that is, ‘his ancestors’, originated in the Northern Kingdom is indicated by the similarities of his message and thought with that of Deuteronomistic

<sup>16</sup> Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (Waco: Word, 1984) 120.

<sup>17</sup> E.g., Liudger Sabottka, *Zephania: Versuch einer Neuübersetzung mit philologischem Kommentar* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1972) 1-3; J. M. Powis Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Zephania* (Edinburgh: 1912) 184; J. D. Watts, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). On the term “Zaphon” see E. Lipinski, *TWAT*, Bd. 6, 1093-1102.

<sup>18</sup> See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The History of Prophecy in Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983) 140; J. Heller, “Zephaniah Ahnenreihe,” *VT* (1971) 102-04.

<sup>19</sup> Berlin, 65.

<sup>20</sup> Anderson, 357.

theology. As has been pointed out by others, "Zephaniah reflects the cultural milieu of the period from Hezekiah to Josiah and many Deuteronomic themes."<sup>21</sup> The general tenor of Zephaniah's message reflects the theology of the Deuteronomic History. For example, the condemnation of syncretistic practices with foreign cult and customs in Zephaniah 1 is strikingly similar to 2 Kings 23; likewise, the judgement against the nations in Zephaniah 2 could be interpreted as reflecting the prohibition against the Canaanites found in Deuteronomy 7.<sup>22</sup>

Not only in the more general ideas and concepts of Zephaniah's theology do we find an affinity with that of the Deuteronomist, but also in the particulars of language and phraseology. Zephaniah's threats of punishment of the coming Day of the Lord speaks of houses built, but not to be lived in and vineyards planted, but their wines would not be drunk (Zeph 1:13). We find a strikingly similar threat in the covenantal curses of Deuteronomy: "... You shall build a house, but not live in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but not enjoy its fruit" (Deut 28:30). Similarly, Zephaniah speaks of the people walking like the blind, the day of darkness, and defeat. Again, we find a parallel in the curses of Deuteronomy: "[Y]ou will grope about at noon as blind people grope in darkness; you shall be unable to find your way; and you shall be continually abused and robbed, without anyone to help" (28:29).

---

<sup>21</sup> Berlin, 14. See also Greg A. King, "The Day of the Lord in Zephaniah," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151(1994): 26-29; Boadt, 203; Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 279-82; Kapelrud, 56-72; Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11* (New York: Doubleday, 1991) 25-62.

<sup>22</sup> In her commentary on Zeph 2:5-15, Berlin (105) notes that "'Canaan' is the designation for the area in Palestine-Syria under Egyptian control during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C.E., and, of course, for the promised land to the Israelites in the Bible. Its western and eastern borders are described in Gen 10:19: 'The Canaanite territory extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar, as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gemorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha'..."



The similarities which one can find between Zephaniah's theology and that of the Deuteronomist's theological perspective does not necessarily "prove" that he was from Northern "roots." However, they do appear to indicate his understanding and acceptance of Deuteronomic theology. Zephaniah might well have been a true Jerusalemite, but his theological sympathies appear to have favoured the Mosaic understanding of covenant of the former Northern Kingdom. R. Wilson is undoubtedly correct when he comments that "... in his [Zephaniah's] theology and personal behaviour he synthesises the Jerusalemite and Deuteronomic traditions."<sup>23</sup>

## The Day of the Lord

Following the superscription (Zeph 1:1), the prophet immediately introduces the first of his oracles of doom, the coming of the Day of the Lord. There has long been recognition of the fact that 1:2-3 alludes to the Flood narrative of Genesis.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the "sweeping" of creation and the reversal of it<sup>25</sup> would not be the result of flood waters, as in the Genesis account, but an all consuming "fire" (Zeph 1:18; 3:8). Consequently, God's promise to humankind never again to destroy the earth by flood waters (Gen 9:11) remains intact. No doubt the allusion to the Flood narrative was intended to be a prophetic announcement of the coming judgement that would be like a new flood<sup>26</sup> from which no one or no thing would escape. However, this statement should not be taken too literally. As R. L.

---

<sup>23</sup> Wilson, 282.

<sup>24</sup> For example, Ben Zvi, 53-57; Michael De Roche, "Zephaniah 1:2-3: The 'Sweeping' of Creation," *VT* (1980): 104-108; Kapelrud, 21; King, "The Day of the Lord in Zephaniah," 23; James D. Newsome, Jr., *The Hebrew Prophets* (John Knox Press: Atlanta, 1984) 82; Sabottka, 10-11; R. L. Smith, 127. In this regard, Kapelrud (21) notes that the phrase *me'al pene ha'damah* which occurs twice in Zephaniah (1:2 and 3) also is used in Gen 6:7, 7:4, and 8:8, and comments that "This is more than a coincidence, and the context also has close parallels."

<sup>25</sup> DeRoche, 104.

<sup>26</sup> Boadt, 209.

Smith notes, "Poetry uses exalted and extravagant languages and should not be pressed literally."<sup>27</sup>

Although the Flood narrative uses the same language of universal destruction (6:7, 17 and 7:4), one must not forget that Noah, along with his family, was spared -- not to mention the traditional menagerie which entered into the ark two by two (7:7-9). Similarly, following the dire pronouncement of universal judgement and total destruction of Zeph 1:2-3, we are told that a remnant would survive (2:7,9; 3:13). Who would be the "remnant" in Zephaniah? It is to this question we now turn.

### The Remnant in Zephaniah

That a remnant of the people will survive is abundantly clear. We find reference to a "remnant" community in five passages.<sup>28</sup> Three of these are indicated by the use of a traditional remnant term, *se'erit* (2:7, 9; 3:13). Although two of the above mentioned references to a "remnant" lack the specific terminology of the remnant concept (2:1-3 and 3:14-20), the theological inference is present.<sup>29</sup>

Zephaniah does not specifically identify the "remnant" in these units, but he does give us a description. In the first of these passages (2:1-3), it appears that those who have forsaken the true worship of Yahwist cult are called to repentance and return to the covenantal worship. This is only illusionary. The use of the verb *qasas* in verse 1 is both ironic and sardonic. The verb appears to be a denominative

---

<sup>27</sup> R. L. Smith, 127. Similarly, J. J. M. Roberts (*Nahum Habakkuk and Zephaniah* [Westminster/John Knox Press: Louisville, KY, 1991] 185) comments that "The language is hyperbolic, however, as all language of total judgment or annihilation tends to be, and it was understood as such, for the possibility was still held out that one might survive the judgment, ..."

<sup>28</sup> These passages are 2:1-3; 2:4-7:2:8-11; 3:9-13; 3:14-20.

<sup>29</sup> On the lack of specific remnant terminology, see Gerhard F. Hasel, *The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah*, 3rd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980), 130. See also King, "The Remnant in Zephaniah," 415.



form of *gas*, “stubble,” which, when used metaphorically, refers to its flammability and quick burning characteristic (Is 5:24, 47:14; Joel 2:5).<sup>30</sup> Since this verb is not used for gathering people together, emendations have been proposed like *hitbosesu*, “be ashamed,” or *hitqaddesu*, “consecrate yourselves.”<sup>31</sup> However, in view of Zeph 1:18, the consummation of the earth by fire, there appears to be no need to emend the text. The inference is clear: the people are to gather themselves together in order to be quickly destroyed by YHWH’s “fire.” This call to “repentance” could well be classified as a “mockery summons.”<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to this “mockery summons”, in verse 3 we find not so much a summons to repent, but words of encouragement to persevere in their fidelity addressed to those who had remained faithful to covenant obligations. These are the “humble of the land, who do his commands,” who “perhaps” (*ulai*) may be spared on the day of God’s wrath. Although this promise lacks absolute certitude, it appears this is done in order to “stress the graciousness of Yahweh who is not required to deliver anyone...”<sup>33</sup> In 2:7, we are informed that the lands of the inhabitants of the seacoast will be given to the “remnant of the House of Judah”; in 2:9, “the remnant of my people”

---

<sup>30</sup> Berlin, 96. See also K.-M. Beyse, “*gas~*” in *TWAT*, VII, 195-197.

<sup>31</sup> Berlin, 95.

<sup>32</sup> John Walter Hilber (“A Biblical Theology of Zephaniah,” M. A. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984, 15), commenting on this summons notes that “The irony is that no genuine summons to repentance is being given. The connotation is not one of turning to Yahweh, as is the usual case in a summons. Rather the appeal is for the nation to present itself for burning which corresponds to Yahweh’s judgment in Zephaniah 1:18. . . The nation is exhorted to gather itself only to be gathered in turn by Yahweh for destruction.”

<sup>33</sup> Hilber, 17; see also A. Hunter, *Seek the Lord! A Study of the Meaning and Function of the Exhortation in Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Zephaniah* (Baltimore: St. Mary’s Seminary, 1988) 259-71; Marvin A. Sweeney, “A Form-Critical Reassessment of the Book of Zephaniah,” *CBO* 53 (1991): 388-408.

will possess the lands of the Moabites and the Ammonites. Finally, Zephaniah returns to the humble and lowly of his people who “seek refuge in the name of the Lord” (3:12), now referred to as the “remnant of Israel.”<sup>34</sup> It is with these last three references to the “remnant” that we do find an unconditional promise of salvation.

The “humble and the lowly” are the remnant, now identified as the “remnant of Israel,” followers of the original understanding of the Mosaic covenant. They are clearly identified as those worshipers of the Lord who have put their trust in him. These stand in stark contrast to the proud and the haughty (3:11) who rely on their own means rather than on the Lord.<sup>35</sup> Who were they? Perhaps we can shed some light on this question by looking briefly at the history of the Levites.

## **The Descendants of Levi**

Although the descendants of Levi were a special group who alone were to perform sacred functions, appointed directly by God (Num 1:50), one branch received a guarantee of perpetual priesthood, the branch of Aaron (Ex 29:9, 44; 40:15; Num 3 :4).<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, the role of the Levitical priests was challenged early on. The Book of Numbers indicates the beginning of the downfall of the Levite priesthood: Koran challenges Moses, Aaron and the Levites, claiming that “All the congregation are holy ...” 16:3). Consequently, the idea of the limitation of “priestly rights and privileges to Moses and Aaron and the Levites”<sup>37</sup> was called into question.

---

<sup>34</sup> In respect to the distinction between “remnant of the House of Judah” and the “remnant of Israel,” Berlin (136) comments that “The former [‘remnant of the House of Judah’] is a geographical or political concept, while the latter [‘remnant of Israel’] is, in the words of Ben Zvi (234), a ‘religious, ideological concept’.”

<sup>35</sup> Ben Zvi, 232.

<sup>36</sup> Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961) 360.

<sup>37</sup> Napier, 96.



Much confusion surrounds the role of the Levitical priesthood in Jerusalem following the death of David and the ascendancy of Solomon to the throne. It is not within the scope of this article to try and sort out and unravel the "whys" and "whos" of the banishment of David's high priest, Abiathar, the last chief priest of the line of Eli, to Anathoth, one of the Levitical priestly cities (1 Kings 2:26-27). The end result, however, is clear: Zadok, a supporter of the candidacy of Solomon, was appointed high priest to replace Abiathar. However, his Levitical origins, in spite of a genealogical connection to Aaron (1 Chron 6:50-53), have long been called into question.<sup>38</sup> If Zadok and his descendants were not of the tribe of Levi, the role of the Levitical priesthood would have, at least temporarily, come to a halt, leaving the Levite priests, so to speak, "out in the cold."

Finally, the actions of Jeroboam 1(922 BCE) would have dealt a severe blow to the role of the Levitical priesthood in the Kingdom of Israel. It is clearly stated that, "He ... appointed priests from among all the people who were not Levites" (2 Kings 12:31). Here, too, it would appear that the role of the members of the "official" Levitical priesthood was, for all practical purposes, terminated and the Levite priests were forced to fend for themselves. In the long run, however, this appears to have been to their advantage and that of their faithful followers.

## Conclusion

<sup>38</sup>

For the opinions that he was the high priest at Gibeon (1 Chron 6:1 1ff.), or perhaps priest of the Jebusite sanctuary of Jerusalem and, therefore, heir of Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20), see De Vaux, 372-74. See also Sara Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: a Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993) 150-52; Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (Trans. J. S. Smith and C. A. Menzies. 1878; repr. Magnolia, MA: 1973) 121ff.; Aelred Cody, O.S.B. "Religious Institutions of Israel," *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond Brown, et. al. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990)1256-58.

At the outset we asked, "Who was to be this remnant? Judaites who had turned from their erroneous ways or an 'underground' worshipping community who had never forsaken their God?" The answer, we believe, is the latter group. Let us recreate a possible case scenario.

With an awareness of the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel by King Shalmaneser V of Assyria, those families of the tribe of Levi, who could, undoubtedly fled to their sister kingdom, Judah. There, they were all but forced to live a life of religious obscurity. In light of the Abiathar-Zadok controversy following Solomon's enthronement, it was highly unlikely that, upon their arrival, they played any role in the Davidic Yahwistic cult in the Kingdom of Judah. Consequently, few alternatives were left to the Levitical priests and their faithful community to preserve their understanding and interpretation of religious purity and covenantal fidelity. It appears that, in view of the situation, the only avenue left open to them was to congregate in the solitude and isolation of an underground worshipping community. In this setting, armed with the core of the Book of Deuteronomy (12-26), which would have been brought from the North by the original refugees from Samaria, they were provided with "a powerful standard by which to interpret Israel's national successes and failures: Obedience to the Mosaic Torah ensures prosperity and divine protection; disobedience brings national defeat and death."<sup>39</sup> Zephaniah appears to have been associated with this community. Theologically, he had been moulded and guided by the contents of the "Book of the Law" which was found later in the Temple during the initial steps of Josiah's reform.

Finally, with the ascendancy of Babylonia, the power and control of the Assyrians began to wane. For Zephaniah and the rest of the "anonymous devotees"<sup>40</sup> of the underground community of Mosaic Yahwism, the opportunity now presented itself for a revival of the true cult of YHWH, but with a definite Mosaic interpretation of

---

<sup>39</sup> Stephen L. Harris, *Understanding the Bible*, 3rd ed. (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1992) 88.

<sup>40</sup> Anderson, 364.



covenantal responsibility. This was the remnant to whom Zephaniah referred: a “people humble and lowly” who had not forsaken the religious heritage received from Moses and who sought refuge in the name of the Lord during the reign of Manasseh.

Donald B. Sharp, S. J.  
University of San Francisco

## CONTRASTS IN SCALE AND GENRE IN THE LETTERS OF PAUL AND SENECA

by The Rev. Dr. GEORGE K. BARR

---

Scalometric analysis<sup>1</sup> revealed a recurring pattern in the Pauline corpus for which the term 'prime pattern'<sup>2</sup> was coined. An outline of the scale relationships between these patterns in the Pauline epistles is given in *Scale in the Pauline Epistles*, Irish Biblical Studies, Vol. 17 Jan. 1995. Several suggestions have been received from scholars to account for these consistent patterns. It is most frequently suggested that the patterns simply reflect the change in genre from the theological to the ethical which occurs mid-way through at least some of the Pauline epistles. I am indebted to Dr. D.H. Berry, School of Classics, University of Leeds, for the suggestion that there might be interesting comparisons to be made between the epistles of Paul and the letters of Seneca, as Paul sometimes divides his epistles into a theological first half and an ethical second half, while Seneca tends to divide his letters into a narrative first half and a moralising second half. This paper takes up the matter.

---

<sup>1</sup> PhD thesis: George K. Barr - *Scale in Literature - with reference to the New Testament and other texts in English and Greek* - University of Edinburgh, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> A particular kind of pattern in a cumulative sum graph expressing sentence length sequences. Prime patterns show unusual consistency and experience suggests that they reflect material which has been thought through and written out or dictated in one operation. The principal prime patterns identified in the Pauline epistles are Romans 1-14; 1 Corinthians 1:1-6:20; 2 Corinthians 10:1-12:19a; Galatians 1:1-5:15; Ephesians 1:1-5:33; Philippians 1:1-4:23; Colossians 1:1-4:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5:28; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-3:18; 1 Timothy 1:1-5:7 with 3:1-16 omitted; 2 Timothy 1:1-4:22 with 1:15-2:7 placed after 4:5; Titus 1:1-3:15 with 1:7-9,12-16 omitted; Philemon.

## The Pauline Epistles

The structure of the prime patterns of the Pauline epistles is exceptionally strong. Each pattern consists of a first half consisting of longer sentences and a latter half consisting of an equal number of shorter sentences. The hinge lies on a central axis. The division into a theological first half and an ethical second half is not however found in every epistle.

In Romans the hinge occurs at 8:20 with the vision of Creation set free.

In 1 Corinthians 1-6 the hinge falls at 4:5 where Paul turns from considering his own position in the Church and begins to examine the performance of the Corinthian congregation.

In 2 Corinthians 10:1-12:19a the hinge occurs at 11:24 with the list of Paul's sufferings.

In Galatians, the hinge at 3:21b marks a change of attitude in the argument concerning Law and Faith. After the hinge, the argument is directed much more pointedly, and with an element of challenge, towards the recipients of the epistle who are addressed personally as 'my brothers'.

In Ephesians 1:1-5:33 and Colossians 1:1-4:18 there is a much clearer division into the theological and the ethical. Eph. 4:4-6 provides the theological high note - 'One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism...' - followed by the transition to the ethical - 'But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.' The hinge occurs at 4:11 - 'And his gifts were....'

In Colossians the theological climax occurs at 3:4 - 'Your real life is in Christ...' and the hinge is at 3:5 with the transition to the ethical - 'You must put to death the earthly desires....'

In Philippians, the first half ends at 3:1 - 'In conclusion (τὸ λοιπόν) my brothers, be joyful...' and Paul turns at 3:2, the hinge point, to give warnings and advice. The τὸ λοιπόν marker in Philippians is significant, and a second marker of this kind occurs at a secondary hinge at 4:8. Similar markers (τὸ λοιπόν or λοιπὸν οὖν) fall before the hinge points in both 1 and 2 Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:1 and 2 Thess. 3:1) and in each case mark the point at which Paul begins to give direct advice to the recipients of the epistles.

In 1 Timothy 1:1-5:7 with 3:1-16 omitted, the hinge lies very clearly at 4:1. In 2 Timothy, with 1:15-2:7 placed after 4:5, the



hinge lies at 3:14 - 'But as for you....' In Titus, with 1:7-9 and 12-16 removed, the hinge falls at 3:4 - 'But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour was revealed....' The Pastorals do not have the clear division into theological and ethical sections, yet the structure persists. Even the little letter to Philemon has its hinge point at a crucial verse - 'So if you consider me your partner, receive him....'

It is seen then that the general impression that the Paulines are divided into theological and ethical sections is supported by only a few cases, yet the structure showing the characteristic 'skewed symmetry' is common to the prime patterns of all thirteen epistles. There are, of course, other scale differences which must be taken into account. When the graphs of all thirteen prime patterns are mounted on a common base, as shown on page 19, then some of the common features are apparent. Scales are not shown on these combined graphs as it would require a set of scales for each individual graph. This collection of graphs may be compared with the collage of the graphs of several of Seneca's letters on page 20. It is clear that Seneca employs a great variety of structures and does not show anything like the consistency found in the Pauline prime patterns.

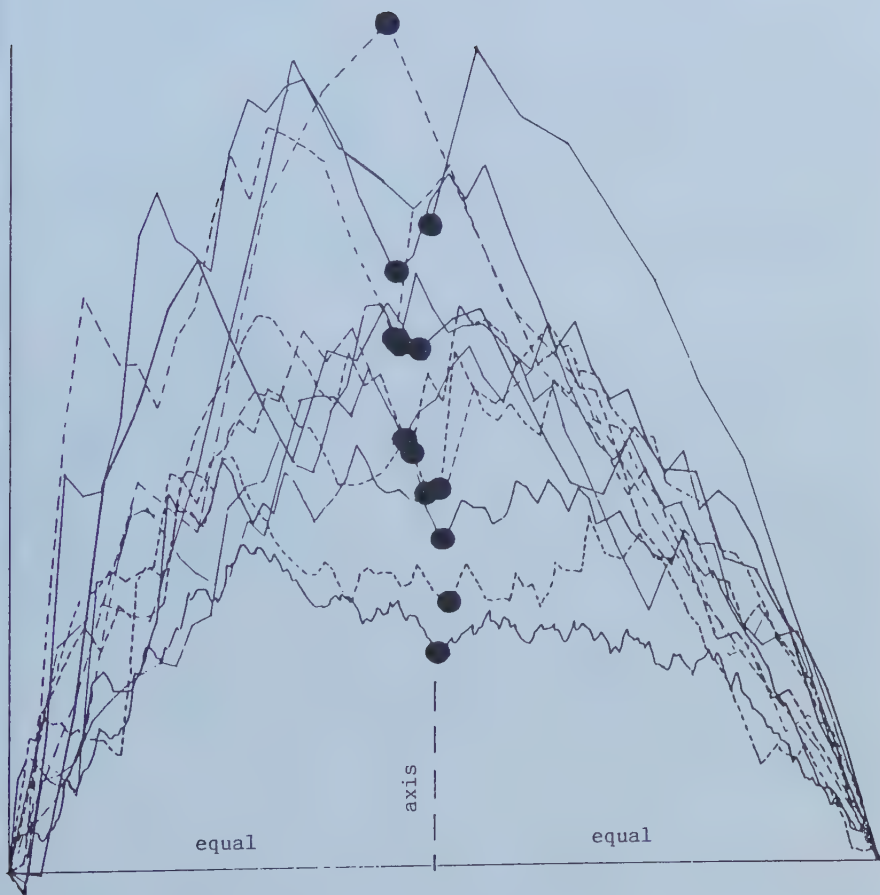
## Seneca's Epistulae Morales

Dr. Berry writes to me in his letter dated 19/3/95, 'Seneca's letters tend to be divided into a narrative first half and a moralising second half'.

Dr. Berry advisedly uses the word "tend" as the tendency is undoubtedly there, but the boundaries are not nearly so clear as they are in the division of the Pauline epistles. An examination of the texts and cumulative sum graphs of all 124 letters reveals that the impression that Seneca's letters are thus divided is given by a number of the longer letters; many of the short letters do not have such a division. In several of the longer letters, however, the change of genre is accompanied by a change in the graphical pattern.

In the Pauline epistles, it was found necessary to group strings of short questions so that they were in scale with their context. This is also necessary in Seneca's letters, and the task has

SENTENCE SEQUENCE GRAPHS



COMPARISON OF PAULINE PRIME PATTERNS

Prime patterns account for 67% of the texts of the Pauline epistles,  
or 88% if the small Corinthian topics are not included.

● PRIMARY HINGE POINTS

SENTENCE SEQUENCE GRAPHS



COLLAGE OF TEN OF SENECA'S 'EPISTULAE  
MORALES'

SENTENCE SEQUENCE GRAPHS SCALED TO A COMMON BASE  
SHOWING GREAT VARIETY OF FORM



been largely accomplished by L.D. Reynolds in his 1965 edition (Oxford University Press). In the Loeb Classical Library edition of 1925 edited by Richard M. Grummere, a sentence might be defined as beginning with an initial word with a capital letter and ending with a full stop or a question mark. Each small question is therefore treated as a separate sentence. Reynolds, on the other hand, groups small questions according to their content, and may place question marks at various points within a sentence. For example Letter 107 begins as follows in Grummere's edition:

Ubi illa prudentia tua? Ubi in dispiciendis rebus subtilitas? Ubi magnitudo? Iam pusilla te res angit? Servi.... (Sentences of 4, 5, 2 and 5 words).

Reynolds, on the other hand, punctuates the passage thus:

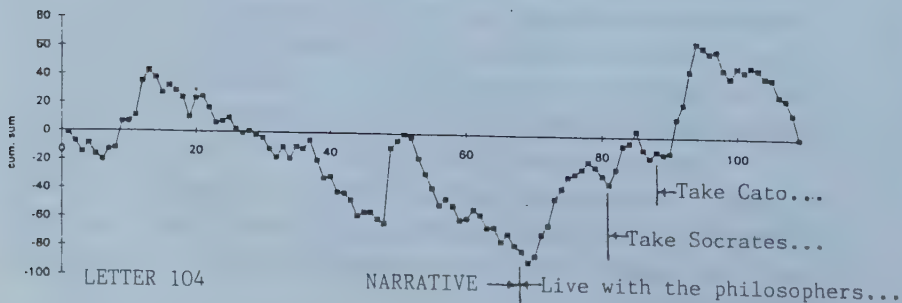
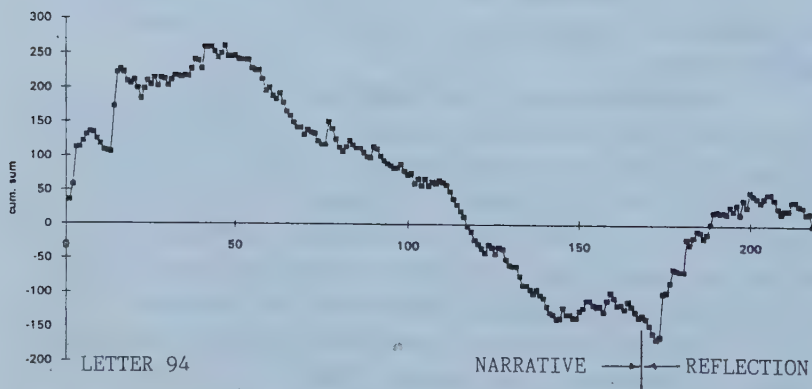
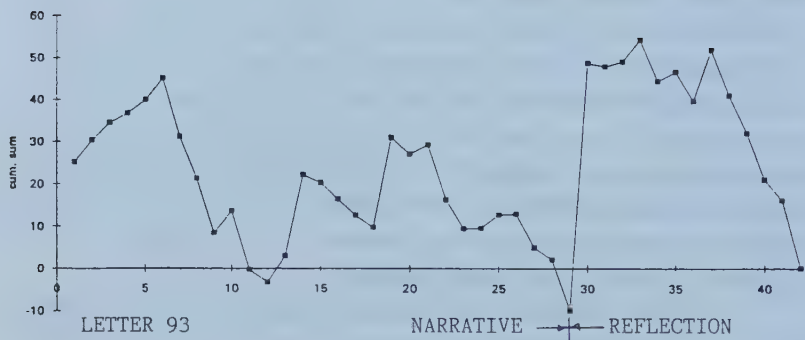
Ubi illa prudentia tua? ubi in dispiciendis rebus subtilitas? ubi magnitudo? Iam pusilla te res angit? Servi.... (Sentences of 11 and 5 words).

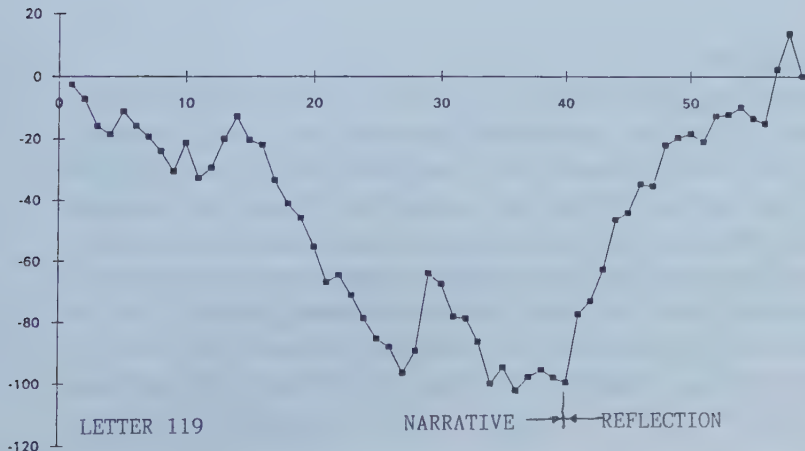
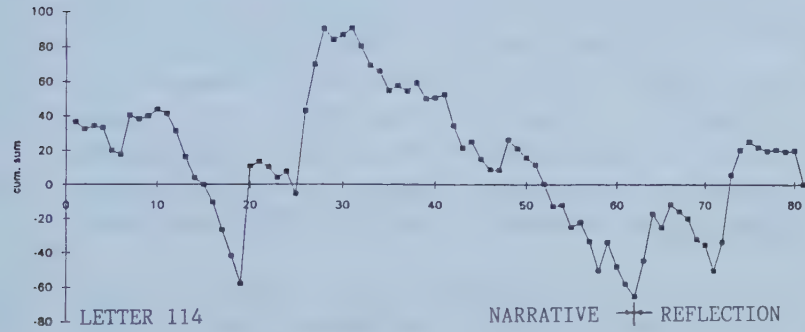
It is unlikely that Reynolds had scale in mind; he punctuated such passages according to the content. Nevertheless, in the process he has effectively grouped the questions in scale with their context. Both editions show the change in pattern which accompanies the internal change in genre, but samples will be taken from Reynolds' edition in order to give a comparison with the Pauline epistles in which strings of questions have been treated in a similar way.

In Paul the division is central, the first half having a similar number of sentences to the second. There is a difference in scale between the two halves, however, and the sentences in the first half are on average longer than those in the second half.

Seneca's letters show great variety of form; this is evident in the collage of graphs on page 20. The graphs of some of Seneca's letters show features which distinguish between the first part which is largely narrative and the second part which is reflective in nature. This is shown in the following instances in which Reynolds' version is used. Graphs of these are shown on pages 22 and 23.

The key is found in Letter 119 - *On Nature as our Best Provider* - where sentence number 40 begins "To sum up...." There follows a surge in average sentence length which is seen in the steep rise in the graph. This is a pattern which is also found in the following letters.







Letter 93 - *On the Quality, as Contrasted with the Length, of Life* - discussion concerning the length of life occupies the first 29 sentences. Then Seneca turns to consider Nature in a reflective passage from sentence 30 to the end.

Letter 94 - *On the Value of Advice* - discussion occupies the first 169 sentences and the hinge occurs at sentence 170 beginning, "We should, therefore, have a guardian..."

Letter 104 - *On Care of Health and Peace of Mind* - discussion occupies the first 68 sentences. The concluding 41 sentences are divided into three clear sections 1) "Live with the philosophers...." 2) "Take Socrates...." 3) "Take Cato....". These sections appear clearly in the graph.

In letter 107 - *On Obedience to the Universal Will* - the first 26 sentences contain discussion about the accidents of life. Sentence 27 begins "And we cannot change this order of things...." and the concluding 11 sentences consist of reflection upon the discussion.

In letter 114 - *On Style as a Mirror of Character* - Seneca discusses in the first 62 sentences a variety of faults which may be found in people's style of speaking. The last 19 sentences contain some reflection on this, beginning at sentence 63, "These and similar faults...."

These examples consistently show a surge in average sentence length at the beginning of the reflective portions of the letters.

## Conclusion

The graphs showing the division into narrative and reflective sections are quite different from the Pauline prime patterns in which there is a central axis with equal numbers of sentences before and after the hinge point. In the Paulines, the scale of the first section is much larger than the scale of the second. In Seneca's letters, the reflective portion at the end of the letter is small in length but generally has a greater average sentence length than the narrative portion. This is reflected in the graphs where it is seen that in the narrative portion of the letter the trace falls to a low point (a falling graph indicates shorter than average sentences). In the closing part of the letter

where the author reflects on his material, the graph rises again to the base line (using longer than average sentences). Only a small proportion of the letters display these characteristics; the remainder show great variety of construction.

It is clear that the Pauline prime pattern does not therefore arise simply from the difference of genre between the two parts, for Seneca shows a comparable difference in genre, yet there is no similarity in the graphical effect. The Pauline prime pattern has bold characteristics, but also shows great variation in complexity as a result of differences in scale between different epistles. These differences, however, are differences in the degree of complexity and not of kind. The prime patterns found in all thirteen of Paul's epistles reflect a highly developed rhythmic sense of a sort which has not as yet been encountered in the graphs of over half a million words covering works by sixteen authors writing in English, Greek and Latin.

GEORGE K. BARR

*7 Tay Avenue,  
Comrie, Crieff,  
Perthshire PH6 2PF.*

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE AQEDAH ON REVELATION 5.6-9

M.R.J. Bredin

---

### Introduction

The suggestion of this paper is that the author of Revelation had in mind haggadic traditions relating to Isaac when using Lamb imagery, especially, in regards Rev. 5.6-9; consequently, such traditions will become important in reconstructing the author's original understanding of Jesus. In addition, and related to this, is the question of the author's motive for appropriating this tradition, *viz.*, it is proposed here, that the author felt the need to respond to Jewish polemic.

It is surprising that nothing of significance has been written in terms of the application of the aqedah to Revelation inasmuch as one of the central themes in Revelation is martyrdom, and a central image is a Lamb who is described as slain, moreover, a redemptive role is attributed to that Lamb.<sup>1</sup> These aspects of martyrdom and redemption, as will be seen, are central in the presentation of Isaac by Jews writing around the period when Revelation was written.

In order to persuade the reader that such connections exist and are plausible, certain criteria must be met: firstly, a suitable *Sitz im Leben* be shown to exist between Jews and Christians in Asia Minor to allow for an anti-Jewish polemic to develop; secondly, that the presentation of the Lamb in Rev. 5.6-9 resembles the presentation of the aqedah in Jewish writings; thirdly, that evidence exists to suggest that such *haggadah* was appropriated for anti-Jewish polemic by one other Christian writer in Asia Minor. There will be, then, three main sections, in addition to the conclusion, which will draw together the evidence in order to assess to what extent this proposal can be sustained.

---

<sup>1</sup> S. Spiegel, (1967), p.85; N.A. Dahl, (1974), p.138 mentions Rev.5 as 'reminiscent of the Akedah but never makes the allusion explicit'. See also M.J. Ford, (1975), p.91; R.J. Daly, (1977), p.73.



## Section One

### Politico-Economic and Religious Factors

The general consensus is that the last decade of the first century is the most plausible time for the writing of Revelation. There seems to be no serious reasons to question Irenaeus' dating of this text.<sup>2</sup> A major factor impinging on the daily existence of Jews and Christians living in Asia Minor was the emperor who would exercise his power through appointed governors.<sup>3</sup> The late first century saw the reign of Domitian, generally considered a tyrant. However, such a portrayal of Domitian as a tyrant has been challenged.<sup>4</sup> The Roman historian, Suetonius, who although writing after Domitian's reign, did live through it, is considered by a good number of classical scholars to be a reasonably objective historian,<sup>5</sup> reports that Domitian claimed for himself the title *Dominus et Deus* in regular written correspondence and conversation, and furthermore, he referred to the taking back of his wife as a 'recall to my divine bed'.<sup>6</sup> In addition to this, it is reported by Suetonius that Domitian ruthlessly extended the *fiscus*

---

<sup>2</sup> See Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 5.30.3): '[the apocalyptic vision] was seen not such a long time ago, but almost in our generation, at the end of the reign of Domitian'. For a good review of the arguments see J.K. Court, (1994), pp.81-108.

<sup>3</sup> H.B. Swete, (1922), p. xciii; G.B. Caird, (1966), pp. 22-23, he observes that the governor in the provinces was entrusted with full powers which enabled him to make his own rules and assess his own penalties. On the evidence of Trajan's reply to Pliny's letter about the Christians (Pliny, *Ep.* x.97), the only restriction on the governor was that he could not initiate procedure, there must be an accuser (*delator*); S.R.F. Price, (1984), pp. 2, and 43-44, Price realizes the limitations of the Roman governor and states that in many cases the cities continued to organize themselves (p. 2).

<sup>4</sup> See L.L. Thompson, (1990) and B.W. Jones (1992). For a response to L.L. Thompson see K.A. Strand, (1991), pp. 188-190.

<sup>5</sup> J. Ektor (1980); B. Baldwin, (1983); A. Wallace-Hadrill, (1983); M. Grant, (1970), pp. 329-340; M. Grant's revision of *Suetonius*, (1979), p. 8; M. Grant, (1994), p. 84, 97.

<sup>6</sup> *Dom.* 13.

*Judaicus* by the use of informers, established under Vespasian after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, to those of Jewish origin who no longer lived as Jews, and to those who lived as Jews without professing Judaism.<sup>7</sup> Suetonius records his own attendance at the investigation of an elderly Jewish male who was humiliated by those who sought to discover whether he was circumcised or not.<sup>8</sup> Dio adds that the tax established under Vespasian was exacted as payment for certain religious privileges.<sup>9</sup> One further negative aspect of Domitian's reign, according to Suetonius, was the ruthless persecution of distinguished Gentiles.<sup>10</sup> However, Domitian is also portrayed as gentle, an able administrator, and one who had military success.<sup>11</sup> Suetonius presents Domitian, positive and negative sides, as one who started well, but drifted into tyrannical ways.<sup>12</sup> This is not really surprising for a leader, especially one who suffered a dangerous revolt in 89 CE. The classical scholar P. Kennedy puts it well: 'At the beginning of AD 89, he [Domitian] had an experience from which he never totally recovered: a dangerous revolt by Saturninus, who was in command of the army in Germany. The revolt was put down, but it aroused in the emperor feelings of suspicion and insecurity which lasted until his assassination in 96'.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Dom. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Dom. 12.

<sup>99</sup> 'From that time forth it was ordered that Jews who continued to observe their ancestral customs should pay an annual tribute of two denarii to Jupiter Capitalinus'. (Dio Cassius [c. 215], *Roman History* 65.7.2).

<sup>10</sup> Dom. 15. Suetonius records the execution of Flavius Clemens. Dio Cassius tells us that the charge was that of drifting into Jewish ways (*Roman History* 67.1-2). They (Flavius Clemens and his wife Domitilla) were condemned for the crime of atheism, which was one of following Jewish ways. Some have argued that the crime refers to Christianity: I.T. Beckwith, (1919), pp. 204-205; H.B. Swete (1922), p. lxxxv; L.W. Barnard (1963-64); G.B. Caird (1966), pp. 20-21; *pace* P. Keresztes (1973); See also Dom. 15 for the account.

<sup>11</sup> Dom. 6, 8, 9

<sup>12</sup> Dom. 3.

It is in this latter part of the reign of Domitian that Revelation is understood to have been composed.

There is, however, as the history of Revelation scholarship has observed, no clear evidence of a persecution under Domitian. Such a persecution is not a *sine qua non* for this paper inasmuch as the concern here is the question of the relationship between Jews and Christians in Asia Minor; nonetheless, that relationship is influenced by Roman and Greek factors and, consequently, such factors must be considered. The evidence that there is does point to some sort of encouragement to keep the pressure on Christians under Domitian.

From what has been observed of Suetonius' account of Domitian, certain factors become salient to the question of a situation of crisis between Jews and Christians: firstly, the freedom to practise the Jewish religion; secondly, the extension of both the imperial cult, and the *fiscus Judaicus* (in the case of the *fiscus Judaicus*, by the use of informers). These factors need to be considered.

Hemer believes that Christians were seeking refuge in the Jewish synagogue because of the threat of being liable to the imperial cult. He writes: 'Individual Jews may have informed against individual Christians, or the synagogues may have provided on occasion lists of bona fide members of their congregations. The authorities . . . may thus have had forced on their attention a powerful movement which appeared to defy the emperor under the guise of Judaism which the official Jew repudiated'.<sup>14</sup> The issue of the *fiscus Judaicus* for J.P.M. Sweet is important in that Christians may have avoided paying the tax but still claimed the privileges, but now under the reign of Domitian, Jews were in a powerful situation, and could threaten to expose Christians as tax dodgers and thus leave them guilty before the authorities. Consequently, Christians were in a difficult situation.<sup>15</sup> If they did not recant of the Christian faith, they would be forced out of the synagogue and exposed to the authorities.

---

<sup>13</sup> P. Kennedy, (1969), p. 26. For the revolt of Saturninus see Dio Cassius's *Roman History* 65.2,2,1.

<sup>14</sup> W.H.C. Frend, (1965), pp. 178-209; C.J. Hemer, (1986), p. 8; D.A. DeSilva, (1992), pp. 287-289; C.J. Setzer, (1994), pp. 99-104.

<sup>15</sup> J.P.M. Sweet, (1979), pp. 28-31.



This seems plausible inasmuch as Jews had every reason to be unhappy with the growing Christian faith. H.B. Swete observes that Jews may have had a policy of maintaining the status quo by shutting their eyes to much that their consciences disapproved so as to be able to practise their religion unmolested.<sup>16</sup> The Book of Acts illustrates H.B. Swete's point. Acts 16.19-24 indicates that Christians were perceived as a danger to society (see especially 16.21). Furthermore, Christians were perceived as Jews, consequently, there would be a great concern on the part of Jews to distinguish themselves from the trouble making Christians, Acts 19.21-41 illustrates this. In this period, Domitian, whose increasing tyranny was connected with his fear of political usurpers, would most certainly, and did, have the troublesome members of society suppressed. This whole situation is, *a fortiori*, expressed clearly in Rev. 2.9-10 and 3.9. This may be seen in the word βλασφημίαν of Rev. 2.9 which is thought to allude to accusations Jews were bringing against Christians, i.e., that they were not loyal to Rome. The consequence of this βλασφημίαν is spelt out in Rev. 2.10:

ἰδοὺ μέλλει ὁ διάβολος ἐξ ὑμῶν εἰς φυλακὴν

The ὁ διάβολος being the name for the Roman authorities, only Rome had the power to place someone εἰς φυλακὴν. Consequently, the situation was a real and perceived crisis to which Christians had to respond to. Similarly, in Rev. 2.9 there is a hint of response to Jewish claims about Christians, viz., that they are not Christians at all:

Οἶδὰ σου τὴν θλίψιν καὶ τὴν πτωχείαν, ἀλλὰ πλούσιος εἶ, καὶ τὴν βλασφημίαν ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους εἶναι ἑαυτοὺς καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀλλὰ συναγωγὴ τοῦ Σατανᾶ.

The suggested setting here is one of Jews declaring that Christians were not Ἰουδαῖοι, and 2.9 is the author's retort against the Jews i.e., they are the ones who are not Ἰουδαῖοι. DeSilva comments that during this period Jews needed to consolidate their identity over and against sectarian movements and the claim of the early church upon the title 'true Israel'.<sup>17</sup> This situation is illustrated by the inclusion of the Minim in the *Eighteen Benedictions*, Hemer

<sup>16</sup> H.B. Swete, (1922), p. lxxvi.

<sup>17</sup> D.A. DeSilva, (1992), p. 228.

believes it was developed as a way of detecting Christians in the synagogues.<sup>18</sup>

### Conclusion

In sum, a suitable situation can be established which allows for the possibility of debate between Jews and Christians and, *a fortiori*, Revelation itself alludes to such a situation. One in which Domitian encouraged the local populace, which would have included the Jews, to pass on information to the governors that the Christians were a threat to society. The discussion will now progress to Revelation and the aqedah tradition.

## Section Two

### Revelation and the Aqedah

Having satisfied the first criterion, the prominent themes in Revelation need to be observed alongside those of the aqedah. One such theme in Revelation is the witness/martyr motif. The author aims, by the use of this motif, to encourage Christians to stay firm to the witness of Jesus Christ, even unto death, if this is required.<sup>19</sup> The witness/martyr themes are prominent features in the work of R. Bauckham on Revelation. Such themes, he observes, are directly related to the figure of Jesus. Jesus is mentioned fourteen times and on seven occasions Jesus is connected with μαρτυρία.<sup>20</sup> The connection of μαρτυρία with the figure of Christ is related to his death, consequently, the testimony he bears is that which resulted in his death. Moreover, it is a witness that his followers must continue (Rev. 12.11). The result of this faithful testimony to God will result in victory (νίκος) through redemption (Rev. 5.9).

---

<sup>18</sup> C.J. Hemer, (1986), p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> This is shown clearly in the work of M.G. Reddish, (1988), p. 89, who argues that the author identifies the conquering Christ as the martyred Christ in order to encourage Christians to stay firm in times of difficulty. See also the work of A.A. Trites, (1973 and 1977); J.P.M. Sweet, (1981).

<sup>20</sup> R.J. Bauckham. (1993), p. 66, 72. The seven occurrences are: 1.2; 5. 9; 12.17; 19.10 (twice); 20.4.

In addition to the witness/martyr motifs and the resulting victory, the central and key image of Revelation needs to be observed, viz., the ἄρνιον which appears *vis-à-vis* Jesus twenty eight times. Bauckham points out that the work of the Lamb in Rev. 5 is controlled by the two motifs of messianic war and the new Exodus.<sup>21</sup> He does not see the witness/martyr motif as explicitly related to these. However, although it might not be explicit, there are good reasons to believe that such a motif exists in that Rev. 5 sets the scene for the presentation of the lamb, and the author is presenting Jesus as a proto-martyr figure; consequently, hints of a martyr motif need to be observed in relationship to Rev. 5.6-9. Examination of features of the aqedah will facilitate this observation.

It should be noted that no direct connection can be made between Rev. 5.6-9 and the aqedah tradition. However, the author of Revelation is not wooden in his use of source/tradition material and so the influence of the aqedah cannot be ruled out *a priori* on the basis that Isaac is not mentioned in the text.

Observations of the least disputed aqedah texts will be carried out in order to establish which texts resemble ideas seen in Rev. 5.6-9 and show ideas that can be seen to pre-date the writing of Revelation.

## **Pseudo-Philo**

Pseudo-Philo's presentation of the aqedah puts forward Isaac as the lamb who is offered on the altar in place of an animal:

'Hear me, father. If a lamb of the flock is accepted as sacrifice to the LORD with an odour of sweetness and for the wicked deeds of men animals are appointed to be killed, but man is designed to inherit the world, how then do you say to me, "Come and inherit life without limit and time without measure?" Yet have I not been born into the world to be offered as a sacrifice to him who made me?' *L AB 32.3*.<sup>22</sup>

The obedience and willingness of Isaac to suffer and die are prominent inasmuch as he acknowledges his *raison d'être* which is

---

<sup>21</sup> R.J.Bauckham, (1993), p. 72.

<sup>22</sup> Translation used is D.J. Harrington, (1985) in J.H. Charlesworth's *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Vol. Two.



to be offered as a sacrifice to God. The reason for the sacrifice is clearly expressed in the atoning effects which the sacrifice will have for 'the wicked deeds of men'. A further aspect of Pseudo-Philo's presentation is:

'Now my blessedness will be above that of all men, because there will be nothing like this; and about me future generations will be instructed and through me the peoples will understand that the LORD has made the soul of a man worthy to be a sacrifice'. *LAB.* 32.3.

Swetnam considers the possibility that the unique nature of Isaac's sacrifice could be a sign of a reaction to Christian claims about the crucifixion.<sup>23</sup> Yet, there is no way of proving this relationship, however, it is difficult to see how such traditions about Jesus' death would not have been known by Pseudo-Philo and that ideas about Isaac were not known by Christians. The next verse is also interesting:

'And when *he had offered (obtulisset)* the son upon the altar and *had bound his feet* so as to kill him, the Most Powerful hastened and sent forth his voice *from on high* saying . . . '.

The implication here is that the sacrifice was actually carried out.<sup>24</sup>

Further, Pseudo-Philo understands the significance of the sacrifice in terms of the election of Israel:

'And I asked for his son as a holocaust and he brought him to be placed on the altar. But I gave him back to his father and, because he did not refuse, his offering was acceptable to me and on account of his blood did I chose them'. *LAB.* 18.5

The text provides an understanding that Israel is special to God because of Abraham's obedience, but it is because of the death of Isaac that the covenant is made insofar as the sacrifice is understood to be completed. Yet there is no sense of the heightening of Isaac as in 32.1-4, however, it is the completed sacrifice that is important in 18.5, and his willingness to die is expressed in 32.1-4. Consequently, it can be concluded that there is a development of Isaac as an

<sup>23</sup> J. Swetnam, (1981), p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> R.J. Daly, (1977), p. 61. *Obtulisset* being the pluperfect form of *offero*.

exemplary martyr through whose martyrdom the wicked deeds of men are redeemed.

Concluding the discussion on Pseudo-Philo, it can be said that the texts are important for NT study insofar as they were in existence around 70CE although it is difficult to argue on what side of 70CE. Nevertheless, the dating is early enough to place the ideas expressed in the texts within the cultural milieu of the first century.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the elevation of Isaac to that of a martyr effecting salvation for a nation must be considered significant for Rev. 5.6-9. The possible Jewish-Christian link suggested by Swetnam may also raise possibilities for the Book of Revelation.

#### **4 Maccabees**

4 *Maccabees* 13.12 portrays Abraham and Isaac as heroes who are held up as great models for the Jewish martyrs. In this verse, Jews are exhorted in times of trouble and persecution to remember Isaac who is the proto-martyr to whom all Jews should remember:

‘Remember whence you came and at the hand of what father Isaac gave himself to be sacrificed for piety’s sake’. 13.12.<sup>26</sup>

Note also:

‘for whom our father Abraham ventured boldly to sacrifice his son Isaac, the father of our nation; and Isaac, seeing his father’s hand, with knife in it, fall down against him, did not flinch’. 16.20.

An expiatory function here is explicitly attributed to the suffering of the martyrs (6.17-29; 17.20-22). However, the expiatory function is not attributed directly to Isaac in any of the above texts. Swetnam argues that because Isaac’s blood was not spilt he could not be considered in the same light as those who were actually martyred.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, Abraham’s sacrifice is as good as offered inasmuch as the wording of 13.12 would suggest that Isaac is understood as one

---

<sup>25</sup> R.J. Daly, (1977), p. 59.

<sup>26</sup> Translation used is H. Anderson (1985) in J.H. Charlesworth’s *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Vol. Two.

<sup>27</sup> J. Swetnam, (1981), p. 48.

who became as a sacrifice.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, if Jews are exhorted to remember Isaac as a model for one who was obedient, it seems odd that the author understood Isaac's act of obedience as inferior to that of the martyrs of the Maccabean revolt in that no atonement value was attributed to him.

The dating of 4 *Maccabees* is debated, but, it is generally dated early enough to be considered significant for Revelation. The question of the setting may be significant insofar as H. Anderson and E. Norden place it in the coastal regions of Asia Minor, mainly on the basis of the large number of sea metaphors.<sup>29</sup>

In sum, 4 *Maccabees* as evidence should not be underrated. The text indicates ideas about Isaac as a proto-martyr by whose obedience God would look favourably upon Israel. Moreover, the ideas can be located within the cultural milieu of the late first century, possibly in Asia Minor.

## JOSEPHUS

Josephus, likewise, heightens the binding of Isaac:

'Now Isaac was 25 years old. And as he was building the altar, he asked his father what he was about to offer, since there was no animal there for an oblation . . . . Now Isaac was of such a generous disposition . . . . So he went immediately to the altar to be sacrificed'. *Ant.* 1.227-232.

Josephus also writes:

'But on the third day . . . having his son alone with him, he [Abraham] came to the mountain. It was the mountain upon which King David afterwards built the temple'. *Ant.* 1.226.

<sup>28</sup> Pseudo-Philo LAB 32.4; Philo *On Abraham* 178, which understood the sacrifice to have been completed. This suggests that such was the view of many Jews at this time. R.J. Daly. (1977), p52, observes the idea that the sacrifice has been offered is present in the Palestinian Targum of *The Poem of the Four Nights*: 'And Isaac was 37 years of age when he was offered (אִזְכָּב) on the altar'. אִזְכָּב is the preterite form of קָרַב. This would indicate the idea that Isaac was sacrificed was known.

<sup>29</sup> Ed. J.H. Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* (1985), Vol. Two, p. 537.

In the first text, the martyrological theme in which Isaac is portrayed as one who is responsible and aware of the situation and is willing to be sacrificed on the altar, can be seen. In the second, there is a hint of the expiatory theme connected to the martyrological one. It is stated that the place of the binding is the place of the temple, consequently, the binding is linked to the various sacrifices carried out in the temple, such sacrifices that removed the wicked deeds of men. Interestingly, Davies and Chilton argue that Josephus develops the aqedah as a response to the war against Rome, and, therefore, the text is seen as providing a proto-martyr figure for other Jews.<sup>30</sup> The Roman admiration for Jews who held out at Masada and, who subsequently died, may make this suggestion plausible (*War* 7. 405).

In conclusion, Josephus provides important evidence of attitudes towards the binding of Isaac in the first century. The prominent theme is that of the heightening of Isaac's willingness and obedience to death, and the binding of Isaac where the temple would be built, would seem a clear indication that an association between Isaac and the temple sacrifices was being made.

### Comparison of Ideas and Themes

In Rev. 5.6-9 the most prominent feature is the Lamb who is said to have been killed. Moreover, by his willingness to shed his blood, he has won a great victory for every tribe and tongue and people and nation. In the texts representing the aqedah, the most prominent feature is the portrayal of Isaac as one who is willing to shed his blood because it is demanded of him by God. Furthermore, a victory is understood to have been achieved by this willingness to be a sacrifice. More generally, a possible motive in the writing of the texts was to provide an example of one who is true and faithful even unto death.

### Conclusion

It is hoped that the second criterion has now been satisfied, and that a clear connection in terms of themes, portrayal and motive can be shown to exist between the portrayal of Isaac in the aqedah and the portrayal of the lamb in Rev. 5.6-9.

---

<sup>30</sup>

P.R. Davies and B.D. Chilton, (1978), pp. 521-522



### Section Three

#### An Example of the Use of the Aqedah for anti-Jewish Purposes in Asia-Minor

It has been shown that the first two criteria can be satisfied and that, therefore, a case can be presented for the influence of the aqedah on Revelation. Attention will now turn to the task of satisfying the third criterion, and with it the proposal that the author of Revelation had in mind the tradition of the binding of Isaac.

Attention in this section will focus on Melito (d. c. 190), Bishop of Sardis, his relationship with the Jewish Community of Sardis and three catenae fragments, 9, 10 and 11 which deal with the sacrifice of Isaac.<sup>31</sup>

As has been seen in section one, the situation in Asia Minor was one of hostility between Jews and Christians. By the time of the mid-late second century, the situation can be seen to have deteriorated. By c. 112 CE, Pliny's letter to Trajan tells us that interrogations of Christians were taking place in Asia Minor.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, from much of the evidence provided by Trebilco, it can be shown that Jews were doing very well in most areas of Asia Minor.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, there would be a temptation for Jewish Christians to return to the fold. It is in this climate that Melito's work was composed, one which is directed against Jews. In his *Paschal Homily* Jews are blamed for the suffering and death of Jesus, similarly they are accused of stubbornness and of having an inability to understand the figure that they had put to death in Jerusalem. Central to this work is the desire to show the superiority of the Christian tradition over that of Judaism, that is to prove that Christianity has superseded Judaism. What is particularly interesting is R.L. Wilken's suggestion that Melito appropriates the aqedah tradition in order to respond to criticisms made by Jews. Wilken's argument is that the binding of

---

<sup>31</sup> See S.G. Hall's Edition, (1979).

<sup>32</sup> See also Ignatius, *Magn.* 8; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12-13.

<sup>33</sup> Also A.T. Kraabel, (1971), pp.77-85; S.E. Johnson, (1975), p. 94; Josephus *Ant.* 14.235;

Isaac, for the Jew, was considered a symbol both of God's faithfulness to his people and his continuing love for them.<sup>34</sup> However, Melito contends that the binding of Isaac had no such meaning and could not be used to comfort and support the Jews.<sup>35</sup> The argument seems compelling. In fragment 9 the argument is clearly prominent when Melito retorts:  
ἀλλὰ Χριστὸς ἔπαθεν, Ἰσαὰκ δὲ οὐκ ἔπαθεν·

Wilken writes: 'Melito wishes to emphasise that Isaac did not die but that Jesus did die. If the *Akedah* was understood in Judaism as a sacrificial offering which became the basis for God's mercy to Israel, that the offering was not completed caused certain difficulties'.<sup>36</sup> This seems a logical argument to make from observation of Gen. 22, and one that Melito and, it is argued here, the author of Revelation made use of. Melito continues his argument in fragment 10 when he keeps close to the sense of Gen. 22, and shows that the ram was sacrificed, and it was the ram that redeemed Isaac. As Wilken comments: 'Isaac seems to become a type of the redeemed . . .'.<sup>37</sup> In fragment 11, Jesus is called the lamb like the ram (ἀμνὸς ὡς [ὁ] κριὸς), so Jesus the Lamb in fragment 11 is compared to the ram in fragment 10 who redeems humanity by his sacrifice: 'Christ not Isaac' was his battle cry!

In sum, therefore, it would appear that the fragments of Melito provide important evidence of a Christian appropriating the aqedah tradition for polemical purposes against Jews, specifically from a setting of insecurity in which Jews were in a powerful position and were threatening the Christian community. It would appear, thus, that the third criterion, i.e., that the aqedah can be shown to have been used by a Christian writing in Asia Minor, has been met.

### Conclusion

The criteria outlined in the introduction have provided the methodological guidelines for this paper by which to reach a

---

<sup>34</sup> It is curious that A.T. Kraabel (1971), p. 84, fails to mention the fragments in his discussion of the hostile nature of Melito towards the Jews.

<sup>35</sup> R.L. Wilken, (1976), pp. 64-69.

<sup>36</sup> R.L. Wilken, (1976), p. 65.

<sup>37</sup> R.L. Wilken (1976), p. 66.

conclusion as to the likelihood of the influence of Isaac *haggadah* on the author of Revelation. In the first section, Revelation's *Sitz im Leben*, with a particular focus on the tripartite relationship between Pagan, Jew and Christian was undertaken, and a proposal made that a climate of bitterness between Jews and Christians was clear, resulting in an increasing sense of crisis on the part of the Christians. In the second section, the importance of martyrological ideas on the writer of Revelation was observed as well as the presence of a Lamb who redeems a people for God by his willingness to shed his blood. Moreover, the question of dating certain aqedah texts, observing characteristics of the aqedah and a comparison with Revelation was made in order to show the clear similarities between them, and that aqedah ideas were circulating around the time when Revelation was written. In the third section, it was shown that there was an example of a Christian appropriating the aqedah tradition for anti-synagogue purposes. At each stage the criteria have been shown to be satisfied and, consequently, the likelihood of an aqedah influence on the composition of Rev. 5.6-9 seems probable - yet not as a typology; rather, it is here proposed that John is using 5.6-9 to formulate an *antitypical* contrast between Jesus (the true proto-martyr, represented in the Lamb imagery who was sacrificed and whose martyrdom has atonement value) and Isaac (who is not sacrificed in the biblical narrative, it is rather the Lamb). As J.E. Wood points out: 'The death of Jesus is the death of the greater Isaac, God's own Son, who truly died and rose again to act as Intercessor before God'.

<sup>38</sup> The Lamb functions, then, as an image which elevates Jesus above Isaac. It is Jesus who is portrayed as the exemplary martyr, the true and faithful witness to God, the one whom the Christian community must look to and emulate if they, too, are to be conquerors like him..

In sum, the composing of Rev.5.6-9 was influenced by the author's understanding of Jesus as one who willingly went to his death because he considered it God's will. In view of the difficulties his community were facing at the hands of Jews, he addressed this situation by developing a martyr atonement model parallel to that of the rabbis. Whereas they developed it in relationship to Isaac, the

Bredin, Aqeda, *IBS* 18 January 1996

author of Revelation developed it *vis-à-vis* Jesus as an *antitypical* contrast.

M. R. J. Bredin

October 1995

### Bibliography

Baldwin, B., *Suetonius* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1983).

Barnard, L.W., 'Clement of Rome and the Persecution of Domitian', *NTS* 10 (1963-64), pp. 271-260.

Bauckham, R.J., *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Beckwith, I.T., *The Apocalypse of John* (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1919).

Caird, G.B., *A Commentary on the Revelation of St John the Divine* (BNTC. London: A & C Black, 1966).

Court, J.K., *Revelation: New Testament Guides* (Sheffield: JSOT press, 1994).

Dahl, N.A., *The Crucified Messiah, and other Essays* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974).

Daly, R.J., 'The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac', *CBQ* 39 (1977), pp. 45-75.

Davies, P.R., Chilton, B.D., 'The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History', *CBQ* 40 (1978), pp. 514-546.

DeSilva, D.A., 'The Social Setting of the Revelation to John: conflict within, tears without', *WestTheolJourn* 54 (1992), pp. 273-302.



Ektor, J., 'L'Impassibilité Et L'Objectivité de Suétone: Confrontation avec Tacite,' *LES* 48 (1980), pp. 317-326.

Frend, W.H.C., *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965).

Ford, J.M., *Revelation* (AB 38, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975).

Grant, M., *The Ancient Historians* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1970)

Grant, M. *Greek and Roman Historian: Information and Misinformation* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994)

Hemer, C.J., *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting* (JSNTSS 11, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986).

Johnson, Sherman, E., 'Asia Minor and Early Christianity', in J. Neusner ed., *Christianity and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty pt.2, Early Christianity* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975).

Jones, B.W., *The Emperor Domitian* (London/New York: Routledge: 1992).

Kennedy, P., *Quintilian* (TAS 59, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969).

Keresztes, P., 'The Jews, the Christians, and Emperor Domitian', *VC* 27 (1973), pp. 1-28.

Kraabel, A.T., 'Melito the Bishop and the Synagogue at Sardis: Text and Context', in D.G. Martin, J.G. Pedley and J.A. Scott ed., *Studies Presented to George M.A. Hanfmann* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1971), pp. 77-85

Bredin, Aqeda, *IBS* 18 January 1996

Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha and fragments: Texts and Translations* (Tr. & Ed. by S.G. Hall, Oxford Early Christian Texts, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

Price, S.R.F., *Rituals and Power: The Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge/New York/New Rochelle/Melbourne/Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

Reddish, M.G., 'Martyr Christology in the Apocalypse', *JSNT* 33 (1988), pp. 85-89.

Setzer, C.J., *Jewish Responses to Early Christians: History and Polemics, 30 - 150 CE* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

Spiegel, S. *The Last Trial: On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to offer Isaac as a Sacrifice. The Akedah* (Tr. by J. Goldin. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America/New York: Pantheon, 1967).

Strand, K.A., 'Review of *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, by L. Thompson', *AUSS* 29 (1991), pp. 188-90.

Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* (Tr. by R. Graves, revised & introduced by M. Grant. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).

Sweet, J.P.M., *Revelation* (SCM Pelican Commentaries. London: SCM Press, 1979).

Sweet, J.P.M., 'Maintaining the Testimony of Jesus: the suffering of Christians in the Revelation of St John', in W. Horbury and B. McNeil ed., *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament: Studies presented to G.M. Styler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 101-117.

Swete, H.B., *The Apocalypse of St John* (London: Macmillan, 1922).

Swetnam, J., *Jesus and Isaac. A Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the Light of the Aqedah* (Analecta Biblica 94, Rome: Biblical Institute Press 1981).

Thompson, L.L., *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York/ Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Trebilco, P.R., *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Trites, A.A., 'Μάρτυς and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse: A Semantic Study', *Nov. T.* 15 (1973), pp. 72-80.

Trites, A.A., *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (SNTSMS 31. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

Wallace-Hadrill, A., *Suetonius: The Scholar and his Caesars* (London: Duckworth, 1983).

Wilken R.L., 'Melito, The Jewish Community at Sardis, and the Sacrifice of Isaac', *Theological Studies* 37 (1976), pp. 53-69.

Wood, J.E., 'Isaac Typology in the New Testament', *NTS* 14 (1967-1968), pp. 583-589.

**John Dominic Crossan:** *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*  
New York, Harper Collins, 1994

Who was Jesus? What was he like? Can we separate the historical figure from the gospel accounts, coloured as they are by the concerns of faith and piety? The quest of the historical Jesus has at times been dismissed as impious for the faithful, impossible for the historian and a red herring for the theologian. However, such is its fascination for so many people that it simply will not go away. The historical Jesus continues to attract and intrigue scholars, theologians, and simple believers. He hovers tantalizingly just beyond our reach. We continue to try to separate the man from the myth.

As long ago as 1906 Albert Schweitzer in his book *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* sought to call a halt to the quest. Schweitzer demonstrated that his predecessors in this search were mainly interested in finding a Jesus in tune with nineteenth century liberalism. They wanted a Jesus who resembled themselves. Surely the time had come to abandon such egocentric scholarship. In Schweitzer's own portrait Jesus emerged "as one unknown", as a figure alien to modern sensibilities. Schweitzer saw Jesus as an eschatological prophet who hoped to bring in the end of the world, the reign of God, and was tragically crushed by the failure of the end to arrive.

However, Schweitzer was over-optimistic in hoping that scholars would call off the quest. In each generation since his day experts have probed beneath the surface of the gospels, hoping to identify the actual historical figure who walked by the lakeside in Galilee. Of course many have declared the search for the historical Nazarene a fruitless quest. As recently as 1993 the theologian William Hamilton published a summary of fictional "Jesuses" in novels, plays, films etc. under the title *The Quest for the Post-historical Jesus* (SCM Press 1993). Hamilton's entertaining book seems to be saying that the probing of scholars is a waste of time, and that in any case fiction can throw as much light on Jesus as reasoned research and careful scholarship.



Yet the quest persists. Strange to relate, the battle lines in the 1990's are not so very different from those of 1906. The main argument is still between on the one hand, those who see Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet, a herald of the end of the world, and on the other, those who see him as a teacher of wisdom, a radical critic of the mores and religion of his society. There are scholars who, as successors of Schweitzer, see Jesus as an eschatological prophet. E.P. Sanders, for example, thinks that Jesus believed that the restoration of Israel would soon take place, and that God was about to destroy the Jerusalem temple and renew it according to divine requirements.

However, diametrically opposed to Sanders' view, is John Dominic Crossan, who claims to have discovered a Jesus influenced by Cynic philosophy. His Jesus is not a prophet of the end, but a teacher of wisdom for the here and now. He stands on the fringe of society providing a social critique of it and subverting it in the name of God.

Crossan's *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* is a two hundred page summary of what he has written with greater scholarly and technical precision in his 1991 book *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. In this shorter work Crossan introduces a wider readership to the broad sweep of his argument. Making use of contemporary literature, gospel scholarship and the shrewd mind of one who has spent a lifetime in Jesus research, Crossan succeeds in throwing a considerable amount of light upon his subject.

Surprisingly, Crossan spends considerable time exploring the nativity and infancy narratives, an area of the gospels thought to be high in legendary content and low in historical information. Who was Jesus, asks Crossan, that claims of divine origin were made about him? Such claims were often made of emperors and rulers. Why should the followers of a Galilean peasant dare to exalt him in such a fashion?

Crossan takes the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist as being "as historically certain as anything about either of them can ever be". In the gospel references to John he detects a movement by Jesus away

from John. He claims that the apocalyptic movement of John, a future-orientated waiting for God's intervention, is rejected by Jesus in favour of a present tense experiencing of God's reign in our midst. This kingdom is experienced by verbal and practical rejection of the mores and conventions of society. It is in fact "a kingdom of nuisances and nobodies".

The radical nature of Jesus' teaching is clear. Jesus rejects the basic "groupism" of his culture. Ties of kinship and family are thrown aside in favour of an open circle of believers who reject the power-broking strength of family conventions. Moreover, the destitute are also welcome in Jesus' radical community. Jesus' followers are told to be like children, and a child is "a nothing, a nobody, a nonperson in the Mediterranean world of paternal power, absolute in its acceptance or rejection of the newly born infant". Moreover, Jesus refuses to accept the boundaries which conventions of society impose on people. His reaching out to touch a leper symbolizes his radical approach. It follows that the advocates of such a kingdom would be willing to share table fellowship with just about anyone. For in their eyes Jack really is as good as his master, an opinion which places them in the same boat as political revolutionaries.

Crossan thinks the itinerant nature of Jesus' ministry is remarkable. Normally someone with gifts of healing and exorcism would remain in one place and let the sick come to his centre of healing. But Jesus is continually on the move, needing to start from scratch in each new village which he visits. It seems to be a deliberate policy not to do what custom and convention would demand.

How than can one categorize this radical Jesus movement? Are there any similar groups to this in the ancient world? Crossan believes that the movement started by Jesus was a Jewish peasant version of the Cynic Philosophers. Crossan had done considerable research into the nature of the Cynic movement which originated in the fourth century B.C. with Diogenes of Sinope. Parallels with the Jesus movement include a disregard for conventional family ties, an embracing of poverty, a critique of wealth, a willingness to live simply and adopt an itinerant, self-sufficient life-style.

Crossan believes that Jesus' Cynic radicalism led him to stage the cleansing of the temple, which was in effect a symbolic destruction of the supreme headquarters of religion. This brought him to the notice of the authorities who put him to death. However, his movement did not lose faith. Over a long period after the death of their leader, they searched the Hebrew Scriptures, hunting for reasons why someone so obviously from God should have met such a fate. From their plundering of prophetic texts they gradually developed the passion and resurrection narrative traditions.

Christian faith itself was there beforehand among Jesus' first followers in Lower Galilee, and it continued, developed, and widened across time and space after his execution. It is precisely that continued experience of the Kingdom of God as strengthened rather than weakened by Jesus' death that is Christian or Easter faith. And that was not the work of one afternoon. Or one year. (Crossan, page 161)

Crossan deserves praise for a well-argued and well-presented book. His avoidance of jargon and straightforward style are such that no specialist knowledge of New Testament scholarship is needed to follow where he is leading. But is he leading us towards the light? Was Jesus really a Cynic?

As yet no example of a peasant Jewish Cynic has ever been discovered in ancient literature or archaeology. Moreover, the Cynics were an urban movement and therefore unlikely to emerge in rural Galilee. Crossan in reply would no doubt point to the recent excavations at Sepphoris, which reveal a thriving, commercial city just four miles from Nazareth, where Jesus spent his childhood.

Until such evidence is unearthed, many will remain unconvinced by Crossan's main thesis. However, we must applaud him for highlighting the radical nature of Jesus' critique of society. His explanation of the purpose of crucifixion, allowing carrion crows and wild dogs to leave nothing of the body worth burying is sobering for those Christians who speak complacently about the cross. Those

who sit on comfortable pews calling themselves followers of Jesus without any cost to themselves in money, status and comfort will find plenty here to make them ill at ease.

Denis Campbell

*Scriptural Interpretation in the Fathers.* Eds. THOMAS FINAN and VINCENT TWOMEY. Dublin, Four Courts Press. 1995. Pp. xi + 370. £35.

This volume comprises fourteen papers delivered by members of The Patristic Symposium at the Second Patristic Conference held at Maynooth in June 1993. Scriptural interpretation is a foundational subject for all Christians. This was evident even in the days of Jesus who on one notable occasion asked a legal expert the important twin question; 'What is written in the Law?' and 'How do you read it?' (Luke 10:26)

The aim of these papers is to go back to the Church Fathers and examine their scriptural interpretations. This is admirably achieved with a distinctive Irish flavour. (Every contributor is an Irish scholar). The first three papers are introductory of the hermeneutical question and further papers provide detailed examinations of the writings of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, Maximus Confessor, Augustine and Eucharis of Lyon. There are also interesting contributions on the Patristic background to Irish Ecclesiastical sources and the Irish Augustine's use of Scripture. The concluding contribution is an exploration of Patristic influence on the illustrations in the Book of Kells.

Not surprisingly, in a work of this nature, there is a breadth of content and diversity of style which will appeal in part at least to all interested in Patristic studies. Thomas O'Loughlin's contribution on Eucharis is particularly informative. This fifth-century Gallic bishop provided two basic textbooks on exegesis which were dominant for 500 years. O'Loughlin concentrates upon the shorter work, *Formulae spiritualis intelligentiae*, indicating similarities and differences with Augustine and noting the 'Platonic' view of



Scripture with its division between letter and spirit each reinforcing the other to reveal the true meaning of the Scriptural sign.

Similarly informative is Vincent Twomey's contribution on Athanasius' *De synodis*. Twomey examines this work in which Athanasius argues that Scripture and Tradition are complimentary bedfellows, each clarifying the other. Tradition itself is also open to development and the entire process enables the Church to progress into theology. Specifically this argument was advanced to persuade the Homoiousian party to accept the (non-biblical) Nicene term homoousios.

These examples however are but individual courses on a longer menu. *Scriptural Interpretation in the Fathers* will reward a more leisurely perusal and digestion. It is a welcome addition to contemporary study of the Church Fathers.

Laurence S. Kirkpatrick.  
November 1995.

C. Schäfer-Lichtenberger. *Josua und Salomo: eine Studie zu Autorität und Legitimität des Nachfolgers im alten Testament*. VTS 58. Leiden. Brill 1995 ISBN 90 04 10064, 424pp. hb.

This is a large and detailed study of the portrayals of Joshua and Solomon in the Deuteronomistic History (DtH). in terms of the category 'successor'. That is, the successions of Joshua to Moses and of Solomon to David are taken as key events and models in the Deuteronomistic (Dtr) portrayal of Israel's history. The occasion of this portrayal is the fall of Assyria late in the seventh century BCE, and the consequent crisis in Judah arising from the rivalry between Egypt and Babylon for ascendancy in the region. Common to the successions in question according to Sch-L. is the importance of the relationship between predecessor and successor, where the former has played a crucial role in Israel's history. yet has in certain respects failed to achieve all his goals. The resonances of this in the

time of Josiah, who recalls both Moses and David, yet died without fulfilling expectations, are clear.

It is a commonplace of study of DtH to focus on the topic of leadership as a main concern of the work. Not only Moses and Joshua, David and Solomon, but also Gideon, Samuel, Saul, Josiah and Hezekiah, and even Eli, may be considered to illustrate the importance of the topic. This has led some authors to think that the work is neither more less than the story of Israel's leaders (M O'Brien).

Clearly too the scope for investigating the theme of succession is considerable, and has featured prominently, for example, in scholarly treatment of Samuel as Sch-L recognizes. Others have seen the issue of leadership in DtH narrowly in terms of the debate about kingship (J. R. Porter, R. D. Nelson and others). In this view Joshua is a 'royal' figure, foreshadowing Josiah. Thus M. Weinfeld: '...it seems that the Deuteronomist could not conceive of the implementation of the moral law contained in the "book of the Torah" in the absence of a monarch or quasi-legal figure like Joshua'. Joshua's succession to Moses (also 'quasi-regal' in Weinfeld's view), his publication of Tora, his land-distribution have been appealed to as evidence of his royal status (Porter, Nelson and others).

Sch-L, however, sees the events of Josiah's time as crisis, not triumph (thus closer to Cross's Dtr2, but here the sense of crisis is closer to the heart of the work). A corollary of this is that Joshua's embodiment of ideal leadership (Sch-L uses the term 'Idealtypus', borrowed from Max Weber) must be understood apart from the category of kingship. For her the undeniable echoes of Josiah in the portrayal of Joshua do not have the corollary that Joshua himself is a royal figure. (Dtr makes nothing, for example, of the fact that Joshua is succeeded by judges.) At a deeper level, she thinks that the concept of leadership exclusively in terms of kingship has simply failed to understand different categories of leadership. Joshua is 'Mon-Arch', indeed, but this observation leaves questions of the kind of authority exercised open. 'Monocratic' principles, she argues (citing Weber), are present in all 'nicht kollegial bestimmten Herrschaftsformen'. Further: 'Nicht jede Monarchie folgt den Strukturen dynastisch verfasster Monarchie'. This means that there may be all kinds of



features in common between leaders who are kings and leaders who are not. She is particularly critical of the kind of reading which makes of the 'succession' texts (Deut 17:14-20; Josh 1:7-8; 8:30-35) direct evidence for Joshua as king because this requires postulating a 'linear relationship' between them, and furthermore an implicit assumption of 'mono-causal relationships' between the king-law in Deuteronomy and the actual leader-figure in the Book of Joshua. Decisions of that sort require a more wide-ranging kind of discussion.

One significance, therefore, of this work is its understanding that partial similarities have too often been taken as complete, with unfortunate results for interpretation. She rightly perceives that Dtr is more concerned with the right exercise of authority than any particular way in which it might be exercised. Plainly this implies that discussions of texts in Dth in terms of whether they are pro- or anti-monarchical have failed to understand important dimensions of them.

If Joshua is an 'Idealtypus' of leadership in Israel, Solomon functions as 'Gegentypus' (countertype). In each case the chief criterion is the implementation of Torah. The essential factor in Joshua's succession from Moses is his publication of Torah in Israel, while in Solomon's it is his apostasy. Sch-L's exegesis of the key Text, I Kgs 1-11, is insightful. It identifies two important turning-points in the two dream-theophanies in 1 Kgs 3 and 9. The first transforms Solomon from the tyrannical figure of I Kgs 1-2 to one who rules wisely in Israel, while the second heralds a corresponding and opposite change to the apostate king of his latter years. While I think that this account of the structure of Solomon's reign is not subtle enough (there are hints of Solomon's coming fall from grace even in the narrative of the building of the temple) nevertheless it affords an understanding of the narrative (and indeed of the books of Samuel to which it relates) which has a place for the fall of the Davidic dynasty. The great advantage of Sch-L's account is that it allows to Dtr the understanding that 'Yahweh's history with Israel is not bound to the existence of a particular dynasty'. Furthermore, there is no need for special pleading concerning the prominence of the Davidic promise in DtH (Noth saw it as a relic: Cross based his Josianic edition on it). In this DtH, there are no dynastic pretensions.

Precisely because Joshua is not a royal figure he can speak to a variety of leaders. This is a plausible scenario for exile and SchL has made an important contribution to understanding this difficult part of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Gordon McConville  
Cheltenham